

NEWPORT HARBOR ART MUSEUM

NEW CALIFORNIA ART

OLIVER JACKSON



DECEMBER 11, 1993 - FEBRUARY 20, 1994

OLIVER JACKSON: *Absolute Proximity*

The kinetic surfaces of Oliver Jackson's paintings harbor a spontaneous visionary world in which one is as likely to encounter the first images of Eros as premonitions of death. The paintings are like some light-filled dream-state in which we float, half-conscious, outside narrative and logic, anchored only by the recognizable gestures of Jackson's paint apparitions. Shadowy one moment and aggressively solid the next, their fleeting, evanescent presences occupy a parallel universe awash in cycles of activity and rest, celebration and grieving, intimacy and ritual. Instinctual and spiritual, the world within Oliver Jackson's paintings is emotionally resonant and visionary in its impact.

Born in St. Louis and educated in the Midwest, Oliver Jackson has lived in California since 1971, and is a faculty member of California State University, Sacramento. Evolving his mature vision by the late 1970s, Jackson fused the physical and the spiritual, the personal with the art-historical, in his large-scale oil paintings. Form is never separated from its materiality in his work. The painting ground becomes the implicit landscape of an unstable, even insubstantial field of pigment that suggests continual flux, both physical and spiritual. The figures that occupy the evolving field of paint are integral with it—on top of it, fused with it, or immersed in it. Their proportion and position, ultimately even their anatomy, are established by the logic of painting. The fluid interplay on the canvas of paint and brushstroke as they variously move from angular and jagged to sharply curvilinear, from transparent wash to clotted impasto, define a metaphorical drama that is spiritual, familial, communal. Perspective is not hierarchial or fixed in Jackson's paintings; it is in flux, so that space becomes elastic in the most recent works. The reality of any one work is the result of the process of painting, which establishes its relational and interior attitude, or "internality," as the artist prefers to name it. The resulting immediacy of the painting's surface and imagery creates a tempestuous world in which wind and light are tangible, voices and music are physical.

In creating these fluid fields of pigment populated by entities he calls "paint people," Jackson seeks to understand the world that we experience through a more perfect, parallel universe of the spirit. Exploring the concept of Jungian archetypes, Jackson has identified a series of significant gestures that originates in the body stance of a human being, or in social interaction among people, and which also communicates emotional force. The figures in Jackson's paintings congregate in circles or clusters that suggest community, intimacy, the acknowledgement of a sacred place. They sit, stand, crouch, recline, embrace, shelter, point, or appear to play instruments. Their gestures and silhouettes, often dancelike or distorted by the painting, nonetheless suggest universally understood meanings and the emotions of well-being. The expressive distortions of these found and invented figures parallel certain



aspects of modern dance and traditional African sculpture (which the artist collects) in their economy of means and powerful abstraction.

These paintings have a mesmerizing power. Creating a unity between the human and the organic worlds, Jackson's luminous paintings are filled with apparitions that are both comfortably familiar and disconcertingly foreign. A magical surprise animates the figures within his paintings and continually startles us with their humor and pathos. The edgy rhythms and cultivated rawness of his recent canvases, which reintroduce collage after a twenty-year hiatus, have given Jackson's work a new physical sense of the imperative. Similarly, Jackson's paintings have gained new importance emotionally at a moment when society is focused on what pulls us apart rather than what brings us together. Jackson chooses to mine the language of gesture from its formal art-making context, alloying it with the subjective realm of the collective, subconscious recognition of meaning perceived in a stance, a profile, an action. He moves his painting to the intimate core of the present social conundrum. How do we understand the subtle and not-so-subtle communications among people—non-verbal, physical, social—which transcend differences of gender, race, class, or sexual orientation? Jackson's parallel universe of paint brings us back to the primacy of community and an intimate recognition of the spiritual in the simple gestures of ordinary experience.

Bruce Guenther
Chief Curator

New California Art: Oliver Jackson is supported by the Curator's Circle.



CHECKLIST

All works are courtesy of the artist, unless otherwise noted.

1. **Untitled (8-10-92)**, 1992
oil on canvas
96 x 96 in.
2. **Untitled (9-21-92)**, 1992
oil on canvas
96 x 108 in.
Courtesy Porter Randall Gallery, La Jolla, California
3. **Untitled (6-10-93)**, 1993
oil on canvas
108 x 108 in.
Courtesy Porter Randall Gallery, La Jolla, California
4. **Triptych**
left: **Untitled (11-30-92)**, 1992
oil and collage on canvas
108 x 108 in.
center: **Untitled (12-7-92)**, 1992
oil and collage on canvas
108 x 108 in.
right: **Untitled (1-1-93)**, 1993
oil and collage on canvas
108 x 108 in.



cover:
UNTITLED (6-10-93), 1993
 (Cat. No. 3)

left:
left: UNTITLED (11-30-92), 1992
middle: UNTITLED (12-7-92), 1992
right: UNTITLED (1-1-93), 1993
 (Cat. No. 4)

back cover:
UNTITLED (6-25-89), 1989
 Permanent Collection of the
 Newport Harbor Art Museum

overleaf:
UNTITLED (8-10-92), 1992
 (Cat. No. 1)

BIOGRAPHY

1935 Born in St. Louis, Missouri
 Lives and works in Oakland, California

Education

1963 M.F.A. University of Iowa, Iowa City
 1958 B.F.A. Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington

Selected Awards

1993 Fleishacker Foundation Eureka Fellowship Award
 1988 Art Matters, Inc., New York
 1981 Award in Painting, National Endowment for the Arts

Selected One-Person Exhibitions

1993 Triton Museum of Art, Santa Clara, California
 Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California
 1992 Boman Gallery, San Francisco
 J. Noblett Gallery, Boyes Hot Springs, California
 Porter Randall Gallery, La Jolla, California
 1990 "Oliver Jackson," Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri
 1989 Iannetti-Lanzone Gallery, San Francisco (also 1988)
 1987 "Oliver Jackson: Recent Works on Paper," De Saisset Museum, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California
 Liz Harris Gallery, Boston
 Harris-Brown Gallery, Boston
 1985 University Art Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara
 Rena Bransten Quay Gallery, San Francisco (also 1984)
 1984 Reed College Art Gallery, Portland, Oregon
 Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans, Louisiana
 1983 Matrix Gallery, University Art Museum, Berkeley
 1982 Kirk deGoyer Gallery, Los Angeles
 "Oliver Jackson," Seattle Art Museum, Washington
 1981 C.N. Gorman Museum, University of California, Davis
 1980 Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina
 Allan Stone Gallery, New York
 1979 Bixby Gallery, Washington University School of Fine Art, St. Louis, Missouri
 1977 Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California
 1970 Compton College, Compton, California
 Richmond Art Center, Richmond, California
 1964 Downstairs Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri

Selected Group Exhibitions

1993 "Fleishacker Foundation Eureka Fellowship Award Winners," San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, California
 1992 "Spirit Made Visible," University of California, Davis
 "Casting Light, Acknowledging Shadow," Museum of Art, Washington State University, Pullman
 1991 "Influences V," Judith Weingraub Gallery, Sacramento, California
 1990 "The Intimate Collaboration: Prints from Teaberry Press," Ewing Gallery, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
 "Hilo International Exhibition: Works on Paper," University of Hawaii, Hilo
 1989 "The Appropriate Object," Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
 "Marble: A Contemporary Aesthetic," California Museum of Science and Industry, Los Angeles
 "America, Italia, Spagna: Cristoforo Colombo 1492-1992," La Galleria San Benigno, Genoa, Italy
 "Afro-American Prints & Drawings," Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, Boston
 "California Figurative Sculpture," Palm Springs Desert Museum, CA
 Dorothy Coldean Gallery, Santa Monica, California
 1986 "Works of Art on Paper by Black Artists," Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California
 "American Painting: Abstract Expressionism and After," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
 "The Multicultural Imagination," University Art Gallery, California State University, San Jose
 "New Painterly Figuration in the Bay Area," San Francisco Art Institute
 "Between Metaphor and Fact: Recent Drawing," Leonardo Di Mauro Gallery, New York
 1985 "States of War," Seattle Art Museum, Washington
 1984 "An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture," Museum of Modern Art, New York
 "The Human Condition: SFMMA Biennial III," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
 "San Francisco Bay Area," Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, Lincoln
 "American Sculpture: Three Decades," Seattle Art Museum, Washington
 "Recent Painting and Sculpture 1944-1984," Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
 1983 "1983 Biennial Exhibition," Whitney Museum of American Art, NY
 1982 "Fresh Paint: Fifteen California Painters," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
 1980 "From the Sunny Side," The Oakland Museum, Oakland, California
 "Mosaic," Memorial Union Art Gallery, University of California, Davis



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Selected Brochures

Bettelheim, Judith, and Andy Ostheimer. *The Multicultural Imagination: The Arts in a Multicultural Society*. San Jose, California: San Jose State University, 1986.

Clisby, Roger D. *Oliver Jackson*. Sacramento, California: Crocker Art Museum, 1984.

Cohn, Terri. *Oliver Jackson: Recent Works on Paper*. Santa Clara, California: De Saisset Museum, 1987.

Millard, Elizabeth Wright. *Oliver Jackson*. Saint Louis, Missouri: The Saint Louis Art Museum, 1990.

Neubert, George W. *Fresh Paint: Fifteen California Painters*. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1982.

Orr-Cahall, Christina. *From the Sunny Side: Six East Bay Artists*. Oakland, California: The Oakland Museum, 1982.

Pincus, Robert. "Some Observations on the Art of Oliver Jackson," in *Oliver Jackson*. San Francisco, California: Iannetti-Lanzone Gallery, 1988.

Selected Articles

Albright, Thomas. "Abstract Expressions of Ray, Sweeping Energy." *San Francisco Chronicle* (11 June 1975):50.

"A Painter with a Vision of His Own." *San Francisco Chronicle* (13 October 1982):56.

"Emerging, Diverging & Submerging at Oakland Museum." *San Francisco Chronicle* (26 October 1982):40.

"Coming Up From Underground." *Artnews* (January 1983):76-79.

Ashton, Dore. "Pandemonium at MoMA." *Arts Magazine* (September 1984): 108-111.

Baker, Kenneth. "Bay Area's Busy Oliver Jackson." *San Francisco Chronicle* (23 April 1988):C7.

Bourne, Kay. "Oliver Jackson Show Brings East to West." *Bay State Banner* (Boston), (24 January 1985):15.

Cameron, Daniel. "Biennial Cycle." *Arts Magazine* (June 1983):64-68.

Cotter, Holland. "Black Artists: Three Shows." *Art in America* (March 1990): 164-71 and 217.

"15 Leading Black Artists." *Ebony* (May 1986):46-54.

Glowen, Ron. "Power of Paint." *Artweek* (16 October 1981):5.

Hackett, Regina. "Oliver Lee Jackson: Forms That Feeling Takes." *Artforum* (Summer 1979).

"Space Becomes Active Force Under Oliver Jackson's Hand." *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (18 September 1982):D4.

Jan, Alfred. "FlashArt Reviews: Oliver Jackson." *FlashArt* (December 1985/January 1986):47.

Kendall, Sue Ann. "Jackson art blasts off Richter scale." *The Seattle Times* (25 September 1983):B6.

King, Mary. "Paintings by Oliver Jackson Interpret Capetown Massacre." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (8 October 1973):C3.

Knight, Christopher. "What Can You Make of This Painting at 25 MPH? Latest Example of Billboard Art Turns Heads On Sunset." *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* (27 January 1982):C1,C3.

Larson, Kay. "Uncommon Visions." *New York* (16 May 1983):60-61.

Muchnic, Suzanne. "Galleries." *Los Angeles Times* (16 April 1982).

"The Way We Are, Figuratively." *Los Angeles Times* (3 March 1987): IV 1-4.

Pincus, Robert L. "Jackson's Work Stands Test of Time." *San Diego Union* (17 November 1991):5.

Stich, Sidra. "St. Louis—Oliver Jackson at Bixby Gallery, Washington University." *Art in America* (October 1979):130.

Stofflet, Mary. "Somewhere Between D and G." *Images & Issues* (January/February 1983):42-45.

Wolff, Theodore F. "Let's Not Overlook the Breadth of American Art." *The Christian Science Monitor* (12 April 1983):18.

Selected Books

Albright, Thomas. *Art in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1945-1980*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

Callahan, John F. *In the African-American Grain*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

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1983 Biennial Exhibition. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1983.

Albright, Thomas and Jan Butterfield. *Oliver Jackson*. Seattle, Washington: Seattle Art Museum, 1982.

Boettger, Suzaan. *New Painterly Figuration in the Bay Area*. Arcata, California: Reese Bullett Gallery, Humboldt State University, 1986.

Guenther, Bruce. *States of War: New European and American Paintings*. Seattle, Washington: Seattle Art Museum, 1985.

Hackett, Regina. *Oliver Lee Jackson*. Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, 1980.

Hopkins, Henry. *The Human Condition: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Biennial III*. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1984.

McShine, Kynaston. *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984.

Neubert, George W. *San Francisco Bay Area Painting*. Lincoln: Nebraska Art Association, 1984.

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Sargent, Denis. *The Matter at Hand: Contemporary Drawings*. Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 1989.

Wright, Beryl. *The Appropriate Object*. Buffalo, New York: Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1989.

Zakian, Michael. *California Figurative Sculpture*. Palm Springs, California: Palm Springs Desert Museum, 1987.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California

DeSaisset Museum, University of Santa Clara, Santa Clara, California

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

The High Museum of Art, Atlanta

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago

Museum of Modern Art, New York

Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, Boston

Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California

New Orleans Museum of Art, Louisiana

The Oakland Museum, Oakland, California

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Seattle Art Museum, Washington

Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, Nebraska